

MERRYVALE GIRLS  
IN THE COUNTRY



ALICE HALE BURNETT



"Those are the boys we saw from the window," said Mary



THE MERRYVALE GIRLS

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GIRLS IN THE  
COUNTRY

BY

ALICE HALE BURNETT

AUTHOR OF "CIRCUS DAY AT MERRYVALE,"  
"CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS AT  
MERRYVALE," ETC.

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IN THE COUNTRY

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# MERRYVALE GIRLS IN THE COUNTRY

## CHAPTER I

### THE GIRLS ACCEPT AN INVITATION

"BUT what is a Quilting Bee?" asked Beth "I never heard of one."

"Oh, it's the greatest fun," replied Geraldine. "There's always crowds of boys and girls, and you sew on quilts and do lots of other things," then she continued, "they serve a real country



dinner out doors under the trees, and sometimes," she added, "they end up with a candy pull."

"How lovely!" cried Betty. "Why don't we ever have them in Merryvale?"

"Oh, do say we'll go," begged Mary.

"Of course we shall," Geraldine assured her. "I'll run and tell Aunt Hope at once."

These three girls were chums, and an aunt of Geraldine White's had sent them an invitation to come to visit her for two weeks. Mary Lee and Beth Burton, as well as Geraldine, were delighted to accept, and only the day before our story opens the girls had arrived in the little New England village.



To these girls from a larger town the quaint, old-fashioned ways and customs of these country folks seemed strange, and sometimes funny.

"It's like going back fifty years, and living as our Grandmothers did," Geraldine had remarked the night before, when, having finished supper, the three chums sat chatting together on the porch.

"If we could only wear those adorable dresses with low necks and hoop skirts," laughed Beth.

"They would be horrid," flashed Mary mischievously. "Suppose we should want to climb a tree?"

"In my day," said Jerry primly, "young ladies never climbed trees."

"What a dull time they must have had," and Beth's tone was so full of pity it caused the others to laugh.

This morning the three girls were in the guest room, which, of course, was just as delightfully old-fashioned as the rest of the house, and Louise was perched upon the foot of a huge four-posted bed.

"I feel like a judge when I sit up here," she laughed, as Jerry ran out of the room and down the wide stairway in search of Aunt Hope.

Betty turned to look at Mary from her place on the window seat.

"Oh, most learned Judge," she asked with a smile, "how many ducks did it take to make that wonderful feather bed you're sitting on?"



"A whole flock," laughed Mary, jumping off the bed and walking over to join Beth, where the two girls stood together, looking out of the pretty latticed window over the garden of old-fashioned flowers.

"Do you think there will be many young people at the Quilting Bee?" asked Mary. "It won't be a bit of fun if every one's grown up," she added.

"Jerry said there would be heaps of them," reminded Beth.

At this moment two boys came into view on the road beyond the garden that ran to the river. Each was carrying a paddle over his shoulder, and whistling a gay tune, as they walked briskly along.

"Who are they, I wonder?" Mary ex-



claimed, and as if in answer to her question, Jerry appeared in the doorway.

"Who's who?" she asked, walking over to the window.

"Tell us," laughed Beth. "We'd like to know."

"They're Jack Dean and Harry Bushnell, and they must be going canoeing on the river," Jerry answered when she had seen the boys.

"Oh, how jolly!" cried Mary. "I wish they'd ask us to go along."

"But they don't even know we're here," Jerry reminded her. "Aunt Hope says we must amuse ourselves this morning, and this afternoon we'll meet every one at the Quilting Bee."

"Then what shall we do this morn-

ing?" now asked Mary of the others.

"Let's take some books and climb up an apple tree," suggested Beth, who, it was easy to see, was very fond of reading.

"That won't do; books were made for rainy days," Jerry insisted. "We want to do something ourselves."

"I've an idea," announced Mary. "Let's go fishing; you remember what a good time we had crabbing at the shore, and what a fine lot of crabs we caught. Shall we go?"

"I will," eagerly assented Jerry, who loved all out-door play, but Beth needed coaxing, for she had made up her mind to enjoy a pleasant hour or two that morning with an old friend, Robinson

Crusoe, and consented to go only when the others agreed that she might take the book along.

A half hour later saw three girls, with fishing poles, starting off in the direction of the boat house on the shore of the river, Beth with a book tucked under her arm.



## CHAPTER II

### ROBINSON CRUSOE

"SHALL I do the rowing?" proposed Jerry, when they had reached the boat house, and she had launched her boat named *The Jolly Sailor*.

"Yes, if you'll promise not to give us a ducking," teased Beth, seating herself in the stern of the boat, where she placed one of the bright turkey-red cushions behind her and settled back comfortably.

Mary scrambled over the center seat

to the bow, and prepared to bait the hooks.

"These worms are the wriggliest I ever saw!" she exclaimed.

"All the better to eat you, my dear," laughed Jerry.

"Why, Geraldine White, I think you're perfectly horrid," reproved Beth, "and I'm sure a bit of red flannel would do as well as those worms, anyway."

"But we're not going frogging, dear," explained Jerry, "and fish won't bite at red flannel."

"I don't believe you ever tried it," insisted Beth. "I'm sure they would enjoy it as much as frogs do."

"Where shall we fish?" asked Mary, "the river seems so shallow here."



"They are going canoeing on the river," Jerry answered



"It's like this all along," Jerry told her, "but there are plenty of fish. I think," she added, "we'd better tie up in the shade of that big tree, for the fish seem to bite better in a shady spot."

So Jerry rowed with short, swift strokes to where a large willow flung its drooping branches far out over the water, and Mary, from her place in the bow, tied the rope (which Jerry insisted upon calling by its proper name of painter) about a short stake, to which many other fishermen had made fast before them.

Beth watched the girls throw out their lines, and heard the little splash as the corks struck the water and disappeared for an instant, only to bob up again and

float slowly down stream with the current.

"How will you know when you have a fish?" she asked.

"When the little red float goes down under the water we'll know Mr. Fish is tugging at the nice fat little worm on the hook that he wants for his breakfast," laughed Jerry.

Beth opened her book and started to read, but found herself looking every moment or so at the gay little float that seemed to dance on the tiny waves.

"Oh, look!" she cried suddenly. "You've got one; do be quick, Jerry, and pull it in," and Beth jumped up suddenly and started the boat rocking from side to side.



"Sit down, Beth," implored Mary; "you'll have us all overboard."

Jerry pulled up her line, and there, sure enough, was a fish on the end.

"Where is my book?" exclaimed Beth, after she had watched Jerry stow away her fine catch in a basket.

But "Robinson Crusoe" had disappeared.

"He didn't like you taking so much interest in the fish, and he's run away," teased Jerry. A few moments later around the bend in the river a canoe came into view.

"It's those boys we saw from the window," said Mary in a low voice, "and they're paddling straight for us."

"Good morning," said a boy's voice,



as the canoe drew close up beside them.

It was Jack Dean and he spoke to Jerry.

"Did you drop this overboard?" he asked, holding up to view Beth's copy of "Robinson Crusoe." "We found it floating down the river."

Beth gave a cry of delight, and stretched out her hand for the book. Then she told the boys how it had happened.

"Aren't you Geraldine White?" Jerry was then asked by one of the boys, who, it seems, was the very one she had that very morning told the girls was Harry Bushnell. "I went to a party your aunt gave when you were here summer before last," he added.

"I remember you," replied Jerry, "but I didn't think you would remember me."

Then she made the boys known to Beth and Mary, and Jack started talking at once with Beth about the lost book, as it proved to be one of his favorites.

Jerry proudly opened the basket that they might see her fine catch.

"That's a beauty," Harry assured her. "I didn't know girls could fish. But we're spoiling your sport," he added, "so we'll run along."

"Are you going to the Quilting Bee?" called Jack, as with one stroke of the paddle he sent the canoe gliding away over the water.

"Yes, we'll be there," promised Jerry.

"It was nice of 'Robinson Crusoe' to introduce us," remarked Mary with a gay laugh.

"Yes, I hope the poor dear will not take a cold from his ducking," giggled Jerry.



## CHAPTER III

### LUNCHEON

"WE'LL have luncheon at twelve," Aunt Hope had told the girls when they were starting, for Mrs. Hopkins, at whose house the Bee was to be held, would expect them early that afternoon.

"We must hurry," declared Jerry. "I'm sure it's almost twelve now," and she drew in the lines as Mary untied the painter.

Another ten minutes found them

walking up the roadway that led past the garden, Jerry carrying the fish they had caught, four in all, and Mary the poles, while Beth walked in front with a very wet and bedraggled looking book in her hands.

Luncheon was served on the honeysuckle porch, for Beth had named it so at once, as a huge vine almost hid it from view. Here the three hungry girls (for fishing gives one an appetite) made the dainty sandwiches and cakes disappear as if by magic, while they related to Aunt Hope their experiences of the morning.

"Pass your glass for some more lemonade, dear," said Jerry's aunt, laughing at Mary's description of Beth's excite-



ment when the first fish was caught, and Mary obeyed with a smile.

"Wasn't it a wonder we were not upset?" Jerry remarked, and Aunt Hope agreed that it was.

"How far is it to the Hopkins'?" asked Beth. "Shall we ride or walk?"

"Not very far," was the reply, "but I thought it would be a pleasant drive with old Bess and the phaeton. I think we can all manage to squeeze in."

Beth looked at the kind, sweet face of Jerry's aunt. "It seems to me you are always thinking up pleasant things for people to do," she said.

When the three girls, dressed in white, with wide-brimmed garden hats, stood waiting for the carriage with Aunt



Hope, she laughingly remarked that they looked like sisters, and so they did, for both hats and dresses were much alike.

"I wish we were," sighed Beth. "Just think of all the steps we'd save back in Merryvale."

"Lazy Bones," teased Jerry, "it's always Mary and I who are calling for you to go to school."

"Here's the carriage," cried Mary. "Who's going to drive?"

"What a beauty!" exclaimed Beth, when the horse had stopped before them, patting her glossy black neck. "You should have named her 'Black Beauty.'"

The horse, as if to show her apprecia-

tion, rubbed her soft nose against Beth's arm.

"I think Bess has already decided who will drive," laughed Aunt Hope. "See what friends she has made with Beth."

"Oh, wouldn't Dobbins be jealous if he were here to see," cried Jerry.

Dobbins was Beth's own pony, and many a jolly ride had the three friends taken behind him in a pretty little basket cart.

Old Bess trotted along at a smart gait, tossing her head proudly.

"Tell us about the time you rode her bareback," Jerry begged of her aunt.

"Yes, please do," chimed in the others, who had found Aunt Hope's stories of her youth very entertaining.



## CHAPTER IV.

### AUNT HOPE'S STORY .

"It was a long time ago," began Aunt Hope, "when Bess was very young. We called her Bessie in those days," she added with a smile.

"One afternoon in the early summer I started out for a long drive over the hills. Bessie was in wonderful spirits, and the light carriage, in which I sat, seemed fairly to fly over the road. Once or twice I stopped to gather some rare



wild flowers, but Bess seemed impatient to be off again; then all at once I noticed that storm clouds were gathering."

"Oh, weren't you afraid?" asked Mary.

"Not a bit," laughed Aunt Hope, "but I'll tell you a secret. I didn't want to spoil my new hat, as I had been told that it was very becoming."

The girls laughed merrily.

"So back we turned at the crossroads, and home we started. It was great fun at first, like a race, but the storm kept gaining, and finally it caught up to us."

"I stowed my hat away under the seat, and a moment later down came the rain; it was fairly a cloudburst."

"Bess went along nicely for a few minutes, then the carriage gave a great lurch, and off came one of the wheels. There was nothing to do then, but ride Bess; I couldn't tell you how I got up on her back, for I've forgotten, but I do remember riding her for miles through the rain. She found the road home, as I never could have done, for in some places it had been almost washed away."

"But your hat?" cried Mary; "was it ruined?"

"It was," replied Aunt Hope. "But it taught me a lesson, never to be vain," she ended with a laugh.

"What a shame!" cried Beth. "Couldn't you get another like it?"

"Why, little goosie, it grows more

beautiful every time I think of it," laughed Aunt Hope, giving Beth's cheek a pinch.

"I shouldn't have been half so brave," said Mary.

"I should have crawled under the seat with the hat," giggled Jerry.

"Why, what a fib!" exclaimed Beth. "I know you would have done just what your Aunt Hope did."



## CHAPTER V

### THE QUILTING BEE

As they were nearing the farm where the Quilting Bee was to be held, the girls saw a crowd of people, young and old, already gathered on the lawn.

"I'm sure we'll have a good time now," cried Beth.

When the phaeton stopped before the house, a short, elderly lady hurried out to greet them.

"Her cheeks are as rosy as apples,"

thought Beth, looking at Mrs. Hopkins' smiling face.

The farmer's wife had a pleasant word for each of the girls, and lost no time in introducing them to the other young people.

Aunt Hope had crossed the lawn to where a group of women, in the shade of a large elm, were hard at work on a quilt, that was stretched on a square frame around which they sat, laughing and talking as they sewed.

She was gladly welcomed by them all, for Aunt Hope, as you may have guessed, was a great favorite, and a place was soon found for her. In a few moments she was busily stitching away with the others.



A number of girls and boys sat in a large circle upon the grass, and they were all busy sewing long strips of varied colored materials together. This group the girls at once decided to join, as they all seemed to be having such a jolly time.

Several of these boys and girls remembered Jerry from her former visit, and were very friendly, all of which made the girls feel at home.

The funny antics of some of the boys, who were, for the first time in their lives, trying to use a needle, kept the girls in constant peals of laughter. One fat fellow, who was called Dick, was trying to sew with a thread almost as long as himself, thinking to save time by not having to thread the needle so often, but it



became dreadfully entangled, and in his efforts to undo it he pricked his thumb. This caused him to jump to his feet with a howl, and sticking his thumb in his mouth, hopped about on one foot.

"Wish I could dance like that," said Harry from his place at Beth's side.

"What is it, the Sailors' Hornpipe?"

"That's called the 'Dressmakers' Hop,' " laughed Jack, "and if you want to learn it, why just stick your thumb with a needle."

At this there was renewed laughter.

Then another shout went up. It seems that a boy with freckled face and sandy hair, who answered willingly to the name of Red, had sewed a strip to his stocking.

"Oh, dear," laughed Mary, "it's a good thing girls are not as stupid as some boys are with a needle, or we should never get anything done."

"What are they for, anyway?" asked Jack.

"Why, a rag carpet, of course," Mary told him. Then she explained how these long strips were woven into useful, and sometimes very pretty rugs. "The silk strips," she went on, "were made into curtains and pillow covers."

"Hey, if there isn't my pet necktie, cut up in bits," cried Mrs. Hopkins' youngest son in great indignation, catching sight of a bright strip of silk in the heap of pieces.

"Do hush, Jimmy," scolded his sister



Helen. "It must have been worn out. Mother took only the old things to cut up for rags."

"Well, I'm not going to sew any more," grumbled the boy. "Take all a fellow's good clothes and cut 'em up, an' then expect him to piece 'em together."

"Mad cat, mad cat, sit by the fire and  
grin;  
Take a cup and drink it up and call your  
neighbors in."

sang a pretty girl named Mabel.

The others shouted with laughter, and Jimmy, in spite of himself, smiled.

"Never mind, I'll give you a tie next Christmas," teased Harry.

"Better keep it yourself," pouted Jimmy.



## CHAPTER VI

### WORK AND PLAY

"THERE are only a few more left," remarked Jerry, a short time later. "What shall we do next?"

"Have a game of something like Fox and Geese or Hide and Seek."

"Fine," agreed Jack and some of the others, who were growing tired of sewing.

"But shouldn't we work at something else?" inquired Beth.

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," said that young gentleman's namesake with a bow.

The others had risen, and Harry had started counting out to see who must be *it*.

"What's it going to be?" asked Mary.

"Fox and Geese," shouted a few, but the rest seemed to favor Hide and Seek, so Dick, who had been counted out last of all, hid his eyes while the other girls and boys scampered away in every direction.

A merry game it proved to be, for Dick was very quick at finding the others, and seemed to know the very spots where one would choose to hide, and when he espied any one there was a

lively race to see who would reach home first.

Jerry had hidden in a large, empty barrel, and was one of the last to be found. Dick got a fine start while she was climbing out, but her feet seemed fairly to fly over the ground, as she caught up to him, and reached the home goal in safety.

Then followed a game of Fox and Geese, and when this was over Tag, which, perhaps, was the most exciting of all, followed.

"What shall we do now?" asked Mary of her two chums.

"Let's ask Aunt Hope," proposed Jerry, and the three, joining hands, ran gaily across the lawn to where Jerry's



aunt, with a number of others, was still at work upon the quilt.

"We want to know what to do next," laughed Beth.

"Why don't you try your skill at quilting?" asked one of the number.

"So we should," agreed Jerry, "for we ought to take a few stitches in the quilt."

"Ask the others to come, too," whispered Mary, who didn't think it would be much fun to sit and sew with all those grown-ups, who seemed to take such delight sometimes in talking about illness and trouble.

Beth and Jerry agreed with her, and ran off to ask the other girls to join them, and before very long a merry circle of young people stood about the frame, for

those who had been there before were glad to give up their places, and start on something else.

"Isn't it a pretty one?" said Mabel, admiring the quilt. "I love blue and white."

"So do I!" exclaimed Beth. "My bed room at home is in that color."

"This is the clover design," remarked Jerry. "Aunt Hope has one just like it."

"My sister made the sweetest one I ever saw," chimed in one of the girls; "it took her a long time to finish it. She was only eight years old when she began."

"What was it like?" inquired Mary.

"A pink and white basket with a tall



handle, made of little square blocks of the material."

"But why did a girl of that age want to make a quilt?" asked Jerry.

"Oh, most all of us start a quilt for our hope chest," explained Mabel.

"A hope chest?" laughed Mary. "We've never heard of one."

"You put things in it you want to use after you have grown up, and been married," Mabel replied.

"Oh, let's start one," cried Jerry, turning to look at her two chums.

"I sha'n't, for I don't want even to think of growing up," laughed Beth.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE SPREAD

WHILE the girls had been quilting, the boys had been busy carrying two long tables from one of the outhouses, and setting them in place on the lawn. Then, by laying long planks on the top of boxes, they made seats for the many guests.

The quilt was finished now, and the girls hurried over to help put on the table cloths and napkins.



Red had sewed a strip to his stocking

Harry came out of the house, balancing a tray high in the air on three fingers.

"Make way for the head waiter," he cried.

"Oh, be careful," begged Jerry. "If you drop those knives and forks they'll have to be washed all over again."

Harry had by this time reached the table, and he lowered the tray with such a fine flourish and smile that Jerry fairly gasped.

"You needn't try that stunt with anything to eat on the tray," ordered Jack, at which the others laughed.

Now came Mrs. Hopkins, assisted by the other ladies, carrying such heaps of good things that Beth's eyes opened wide in surprise, and Mary, standing close be-



side her, whispered that she had never seen so much to eat in all her life.

"Please put the doughnuts right over here by me," requested Dick. "I'll take good care of them," he promised with a grin.

"Right over here, right over here," cried three or four others.

The young people were at one table, while the older folks, of whom there were not so many, occupied the smaller of the two,—and a merry time followed.

Harry sat at one end, being the oldest boy present, and carved the fine, fat turkey with great skill; of course, he had to stand a lot of teasing, but being a good-natured boy, he always had an answer for those who poked fun at him.

"Papa, gimme another piece," cried Jimmy. "I'm awfully hungry to-day."

Harry, standing at the head of the table, carving knife in hand, looked sternly at the small boy.

"Children should be seen and not heard; another word and you leave the table, sir," he threatened with an angry scowl.

"Mamma, can't I have some?" wailed Jimmy, turning to where Jerry was seated at the other end of the long table. All the other girls and boys were screaming now with laughter.

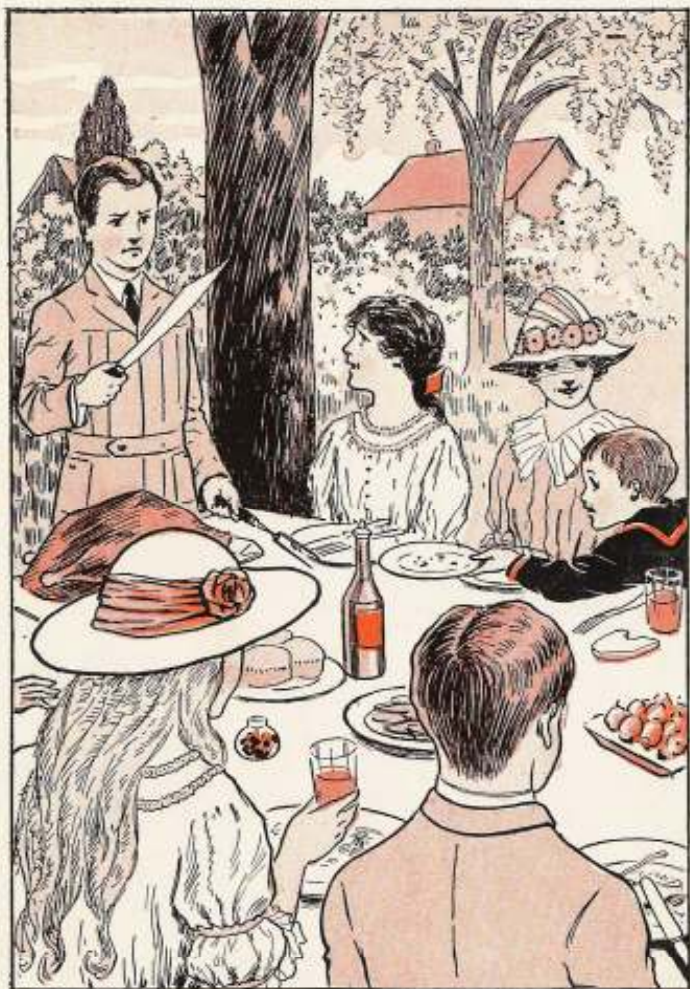
"Silence!" thundered Harry, "or I shall send you all to bed."

"Don't you think, my dear," smiled

Jerry, "that he could have a small piece now?"

"Just as you say," he answered, heaping high Jimmy's plate that lay before him.





"Papa, gim'me another piece," cried Jimmy

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE AIR CASTLE

"HAVE you seen Helen's playhouse?" asked Mabel of Beth.

"No, but I should love to," was the answer.

"You'll never guess where it is," continued Mabel.

Helen, hearing Beth's remark, offered to show it to any one who would like to see her playhouse when they had finished supper.

"I wish it were over," thought Beth. "I'm sure we've all had plenty to eat." But she sat in patience, waiting for the boys to have done.

"A few of these cookies are going right in my little coat pocket," chuckled Dick in a low voice, "for I might get hungry on the way home."

"How could you?" Mary answered. "I don't believe you'll be hungry for a week."

"Ha, ha! you don't know me," laughed Dick.

A few minutes more and every one was satisfied, even the greedy Dick declaring he could hold no more, so the girls and boys made haste to carry their dishes back to the kitchen.



Then Helen took Beth and her two chums to see the playhouse. At the very end of the garden stood a large oak tree, and when they had reached it Helen stopped.

"Well, I don't see it anywhere; is it a make-believe playhouse?"

"It's a castle in the air," Helen laughingly replied; "look up and you'll see," she added.

When they did turn their eyes upward, the girls, to their surprise, saw a tiny little house high in the branches.

"Oh, let's go up," cried Jerry in delight.

"But how can we?" asked Beth, who didn't want to spoil her pretty white frock by climbing.

Helen ran around to the opposite side of the tree, and the others followed. There they found a ladder, made of rope, that swung from one of the lower limbs.

"When I get up I pull this after me," she explained.

Jerry now led the way, and when they had all reached the air castle the girls were delighted.

"It's like being on a ship," cried Beth, for the wind was blowing gently, and the house swayed with the tree.

Over the doorway was a sign which read, "Tree Top Lodge," and from the three little windows one could see for miles around the countryside.

Mary would have liked nothing better



than to remain where they were and play house, but Jerry knew it was time for them to be starting home, for the sun was fast sinking to rest, turning the sky a lovely pink.

"Won't you ask your aunt if you may ride home with us?" begged Mabel, when the four girls had returned from their visit to Tree Top Lodge; "you know we came on a straw ride," she added.

"How jolly! I'm sure she will be glad to have us go with you," cried Jerry, who longed to join the happy party. "I'll run and ask her."

Aunt Hope gave her permission at once, offering to take some of the grown-ups home with her in the phaeton.



So after all had said their good-byes to the Hopkins family, the gay party started off with a shouting of joyous young voices, and a merry ringing of bells.

THE END

# THE MERRYVALE GIRLS

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For many days the boys had been looking forward to the party to be held at Toad Brown's house, but the evening finally arrived and a number of new games were played, although a few things happened which were not on the program.

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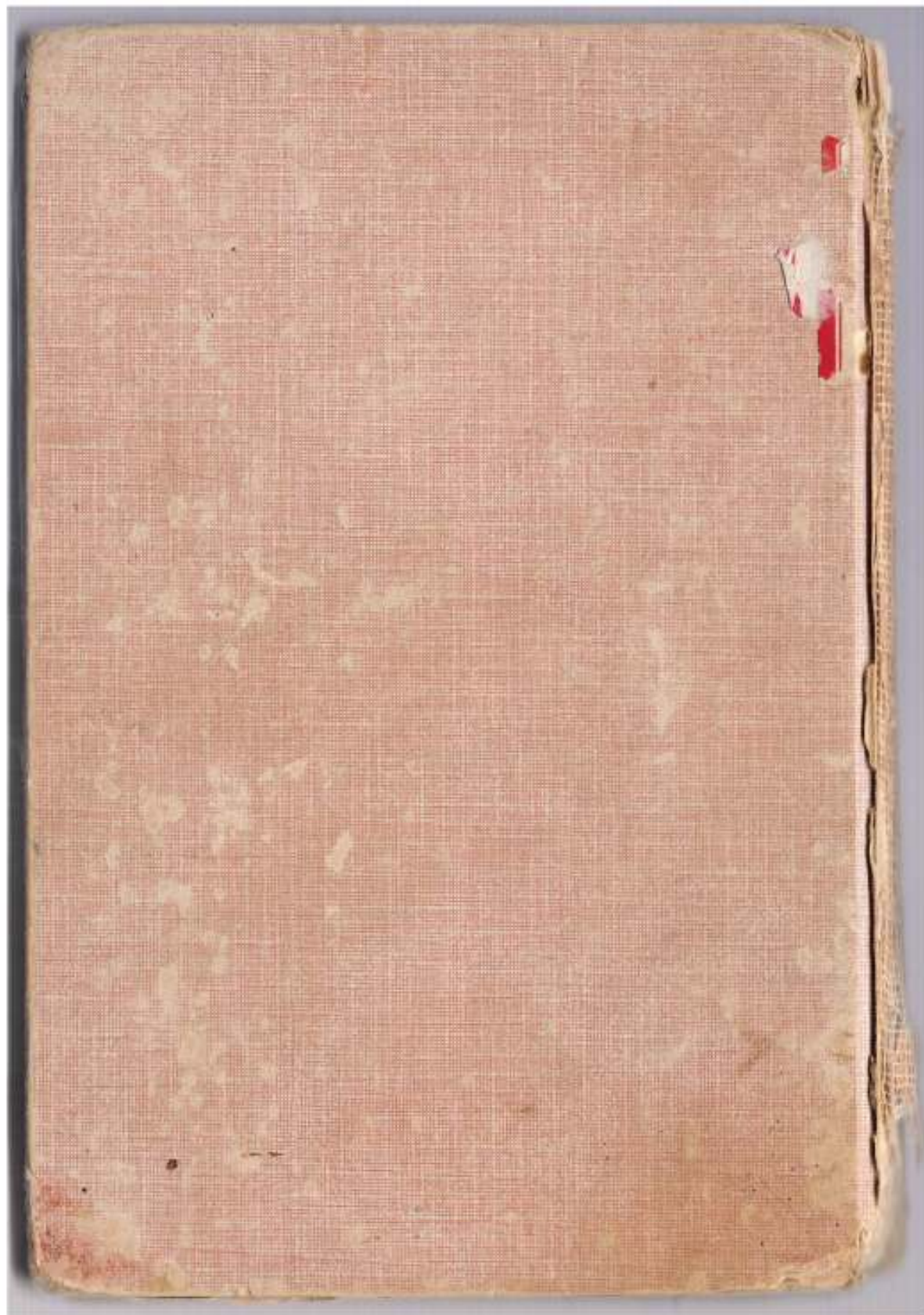
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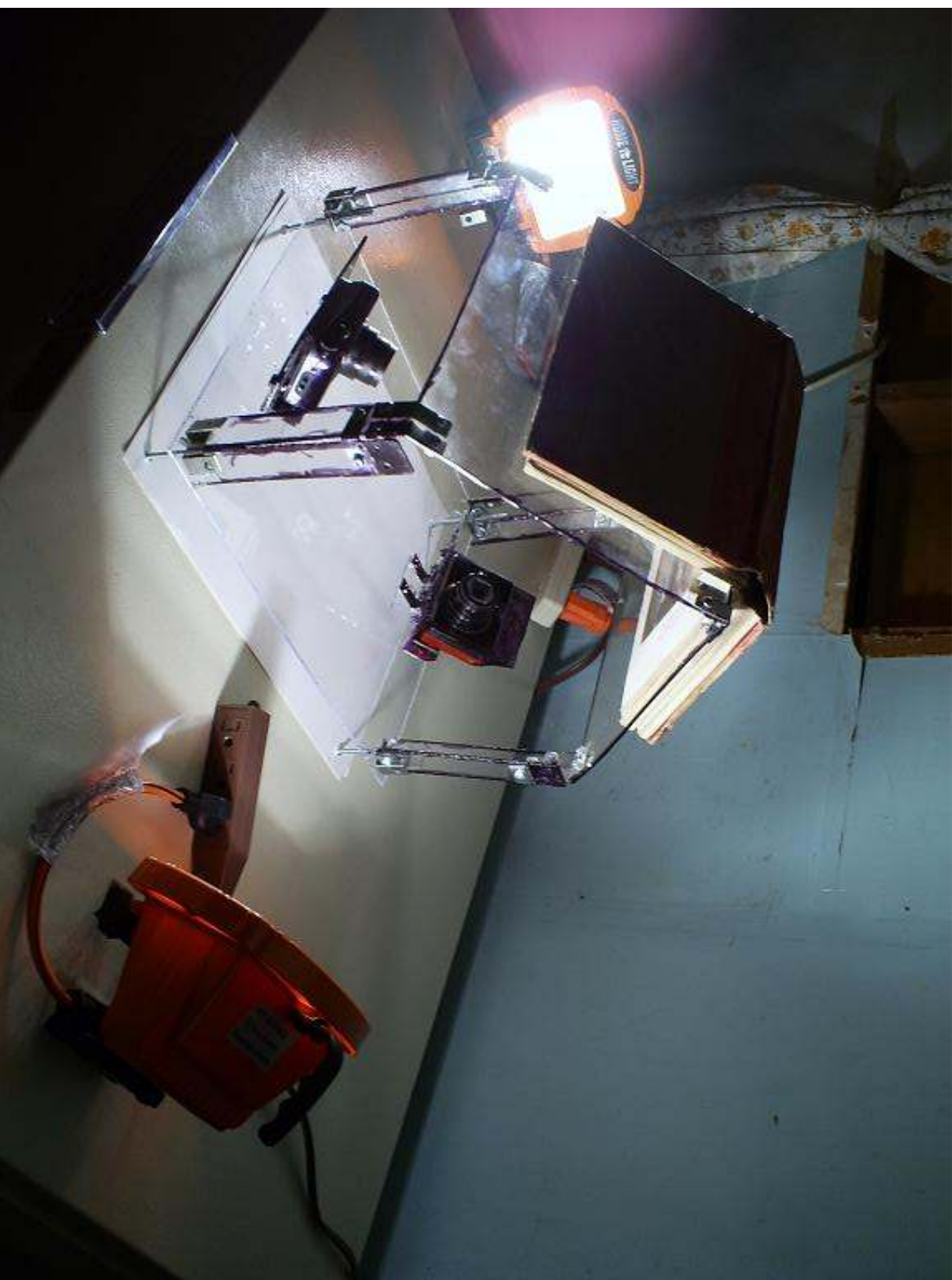
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